

Hotchkiss Block
11 East Main Street
Waterbury
New Haven County
Connecticut

HABS No. CT-345

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CT-345

HOTCHKISS BLOCK (IRVING BLOCK)

Location: 11 East Main Street, Waterbury, New Haven County, Connecticut.

Present Owner: City of Waterbury.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: Vacant; to be demolished 1979.

Significance: The Hotchkiss Block was the first major office block built in Waterbury. It is central to the commercial district, and the halls on the upper floors served as meeting places for many local fraternal organizations. The building is attributed to Henry Austin, a prominent New Haven architect.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1852-1853.
2. Architect: Unknown; attributed to both Henry Austin and D.H. Meloy.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Julius Hotchkiss built the structure in 1852-1853. In 1876, the structure became known as the Irving Block, presumably after a new owner. In 1892, the structure was purchased by the Platt family, who also owned the two adjacent buildings known as the Platt block.
4. Contractor: Archibald E. Rice.
5. Alterations and additions: The building was altered between 1893 and 1930, although the exact dates of major changes are unknown. A mezzanine was added to the third story. A large Palladian window in the central bay of the west (North Main Street) elevation was removed and replaced with smaller rectangular windows. A fourth bay was added to the west (North Main Street) elevation. The roof was raised, a wooden parapet was attached, and the original chimneys were removed during these years. The first story was completely remodeled in the mid-twentieth century. Many of the former store fronts were sealed off with new brick walls, and the fenestration was altered.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Julius Hotchkiss, who built the structure, was the first mayor of Waterbury. The building housed various commercial establishments including drug stores, dry goods stores, a bakery, and law offices. The large halls on the third floor were used for entertainment and meetings. On October 1, 1885 the large hall on the top floor (known as Irving Hall) was dedicated as Odd Fellows Hall. It was used by the Odd Fellows and various other fraternal organizations and clubs at different times. The large hall also served as a school of dance and drama.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views:

View of North Main Street showing west elevation of Hotchkiss Block with Palladian Window, ca. 1860-1890.
Copyright Mattatuck Museum, 119 West Main Street, Waterbury, Connecticut, 1979.

View of East Main Street from west showing south elevation of Hotchkiss Block on left corner, ca. 1860-1890.
Copyright Mattatuck Museum, 119 West Main Street, Waterbury, Connecticut, 1979.

2. Bibliography:

Historic Resources inventory: Buildings and Structures,
State of Connecticut, Connecticut Historical Commission, 59
South Prospect Street, Hartford, Connecticut, September 1978.

"Irving Block- 1852-19???" The Sunday Republican Magazine,
Waterbury, Connecticut, August 12, 1979.

"Waterbury Architectural Survey, Waterbury, Connecticut,
1978". The Mattatuck Museum, 119 West Main Street,
Waterbury, Connecticut, Ann Smith, Project Director, Lucinda
Burkepile and Roger Brevoort, Surveyors.

Prepared by Emily J. Harris
Historic American Buildings
Survey
October 1979

from information provided by
Shawn K. Caldwell
Stein, Sapack & Ames,
Architects
Waterbury, Connecticut
September 1979.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. This mid-nineteenth century structure has a minimum of ornamentation but retains distinctive design motifs of early Italianate commercial buildings.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building measures 100' (nine-bays) by 40' (four-bays). It is three stories with a mezzanine.
2. Wall construction: Brick.
3. Structural system: Load bearing masonry.
4. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The first floor was entirely remodeled during the twentieth century, and has glass and metal doors. The main entrance on the south (East Main Street) elevation has a carrera glass surround.
 - b. Windows: On the south (East Main Street) elevation the openings consist of a pair of narrow windows capped by granite lintels. The second story lintels are flat and those on the third story are slightly arched. All the openings have granite sills with ears. The west (North Main Street) elevation originally had a large Palladian window in the central bay which was replaced by rectangular windows with flat lintels and sills.
5. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Hip roof covered with tin.
 - b. Cornice: There is a block cornice with a corbel table. A wooden parapet which is not original to the building obscures the roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The first floor consists of shops and offices. The upper floors contain offices and two meeting halls.
2. Interior finish: The third floor halls have plaster walls and wooden paneled wainscots. The large hall has a small stage at the west end and a projecting balcony on the east end. The small hall has an arched partition at the east end and a wooden balcony on the north side.

- D. Site and surrounding: The building occupies a prominent position at the northeast corner of Exchange Place, standing at the east end of the Waterbury green. It is central to the downtown business district which consists mostly of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings.

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the construction of the "Plaza on the Green" housing project in Waterbury, Connecticut. John A. Burns, AIA was the HABS project coordinator. The written data was prepared in the HABS office by Emily Harris in October 1979 from information provided by Shawn K. Caldwell of Stein, Sapack and Ames. Photographs were taken by Lung F. Gee and Son in August 1979.